

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Claims 1-10 were pending in this application. Claims 1-7 (previously withdrawn), 9 and 10 have been cancelled, claims 11 and 12 have been added, and claim 8 has been amended hereby. Accordingly, claims 8, 11 and 12 will be pending herein upon entry of this Amendment. Support for the amendment to claim 8 can be found, for example, in Fig. 1 of the present application. For the reasons stated below, Applicant respectfully submits that all claims pending in this application are in condition for allowance.

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter recited in original claims 9 and 10. These claims have been cancelled and rewritten as new claims 11 and 12, which should now be in condition for allowance.

In the Office Action, claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Murakami et al. To the extent this rejection might still be applied to amended claim 8, it is respectfully traversed.

Amended claim 8 sets forth, among other things, that the thinner-walled portion is positioned entirely outside the protective coating, whereas the thicker-walled portion is positioned partially outside the protective coating and partially inside the protective coating. These features are clearly shown in Fig. 1. Note the positional relationship between the thinner-walled portion 32, the thicker-walled portion 31, and the protective coating 9 (or 7).

In U.S. Patent No. 5,966,067 to Murakami et al., the thinner-walled portion 3 (or 4) is partially located outside the protective coating 10 (or 9) and partially located inside the protective coating, as opposed to the claimed thinner-walled portion of the present invention (defined to be entirely outside the protective coating), whereas the thick-walled portion 8a (or 8b) is entirely inside the protective coating, as opposed to the claimed thick-walled portion of the present invention (defined to be partially located outside the protective coating and partially located inside the protective coating). In view of these structural differences, it is believed that amended claim 8 is patentably distinguishable over this reference.

In view of the foregoing all of the claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or determine that any further action is desirable to place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicant's undersigned representative at the number listed below.

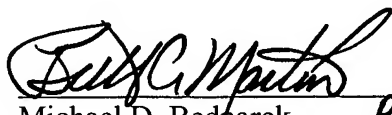
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